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MESSAGE TO THE NATIONAL FARMERS' ALLIANCE AND CO-OPERATIVE UNION OF AMERICA.

BRETHREN:—In presenting to you this, my annual message to the third regular session of this body, at the expiration of my term of office, I have much to say and feel deeply impressed with the importance of a full and free expression to you as to the past and present condition of the order, and the necessities of the future. Ours is no common struggle; upon it depends in a great measure the future prosperity of agriculture and the liberty and independence of those engaged in that pursuit. And indirectly, the perpetuity of our system of government must be largely affected by our success or failure. This is true because the people whom we seek to relieve from the oppression of unjust conditions are the largest and most conservative class of citizens of this country; they are the greatest pro-

ducers and are the permanent, stable and solid class on which the prosperity of all others depend and to which all must look to judge of the future of the land.

Causes that tend to depress and enslave this important element of our country, which may be well designated as the foundation of the superstructure, must surely endanger the very structure itself and tend towards ultimate dissolution and loss of all control. Strange as the assertion may sound, it is nevertheless true, that we have two classes of anarchists in this country; one the avowed anarchists, who oppose all law and order, and the other a blindly selfish class who would loudly disclaim anarchy but advocate conditions that so surely sap the vitals of productive labor that the result is ten times more productive of results ripe for anarchy than all the agitation of the avowed anarchists. If our order means anything, it means justice, right, law and order and therefore must be the very antipode of all forms of anarchy, both avowed and disguised. So just a cause may well command great devotion and energy, but when in addition to the justice of the principles involved in the movement its magnitude and importance and the necessity for action are considered, the command will be recognized and accepted as imperative by all those who have allied themselves to the order. As to the magnitude and importance of the business, you, as the representatives of the membership at large, are to be congratulated upon the

WONDERFUL GROWTH THE ORDER HAS MADE

in so short a time. As will be shown by the report of your secretary, there are now about ten thousand Sub-Alliances; these are associated into about eight hundred County Alliances and represent an individual membership of about four hundred thousand. Twelve States are working under charters from this body and three or four more are about ready to be chartered. While this is a good showing for the time and means employed, it is but a start compared with what may be done in the same field, and may well and forcibly impress you with the importance of providing a more efficient system of securing laborers and more means with which to prosecute the work. As to the necessity for action, all will perhaps admit that it exists and that it calls for immediate activity. All other occupations are organized and are constantly striving to draw the lines of their organization closer, and the progress of material development has brought about such peculiar conditions in this day and time that to avoid organization is to refuse the benefits of enlightened co-operation and suffer from the evil effects of trusts and combines, that seem to have no limit to their greed and heed no resistance except organization. That this is understood and recognized by the masses is evinced by the avidity with which they embrace an opportunity to unite with the organization and this should be carefully noted as an indication of the responsibility resting on this body to provide such laws and rules within the order, as will insure to its members the benefits of enlightened co-operation in fact; and such laws as will assist them in acting as a unit to resist the encroachments of opposing organized power.

Questions of great delicacy and importance will be presented to this body for solution and unfortunately the limited time that the majority will probably agree to stay may render a proper consideration and discussion of all the subjects impossible. It is, therefore, suggested that you try to get all the business presented to the body on the first day and referred to the committees; that the committees be made small and expected to work and report promptly. So great an amount of work as you have before you must necessarily be done largely by committees, unless much time is consumed in its execution.

One of the most important subjects to be considered is the basis of

AN ORGANIC UNION

with the National Agricultural Wheel. This was discussed at your last regular meeting and the national lecturer appointed to visit the National Agricultural Wheel at its regular session in Nashville, Tennessee, in December, 1887, and make overtures tending toward such union. He was courteously received and highly honored by that body and his propositions and negotiations treated with all the respect due his important mission from this honorable body. As a result, the National Agricultural Wheel adjourned its regular session at that time and place, to meet with the National Farmers' Alliance and Co-Operative Union of America at this meeting. That arrangement has been carried out and they are here to-day, and should have your immediate attention and consideration until you have, if possible, agreed upon a basis that will place these two great orders that are working and striving for the same ends by the same methods under the same jurisdiction. So that as a unit, they may press forward, shoulder to shoulder, united in one solid phalanx; one motive, right; one thought, victory; and one sentiment, fraternal love actuating both.

Your attention is called to the necessity of adopting and publishing the policy that will be pursued as to the extension of the organization into

THE NORTHERN STATES.

It will be remembered at the time of the organization of this order as a National Trade Union, the prime motive was to secure a strong organization of the producers of the Cotton Belt of America. It was argued that an organization of that district meant virtually, an organization of the world so far as the production of cotton was concerned and that, therefore, in that direction was the best field to demonstrate the power and benefits of co-operation and organization. In pursuance of this doctrine, the work has been pushed with most vigor in the cotton States until each has now a State Alliance. Other States are knocking at the door and it seems that there can be no good cause for denying them admission. But the extension of the work into new territory where new conditions and issues are to be met, is attended with great responsibility and danger. The danger is, that the objects of the order and the methods it proposes to work by will be misunderstood. It should be remembered that the evils which now afflict agriculture are of a general character, and have been for years developing and consequently no spasmodic effort will relieve, neither can an effort directed by one idea alone be adequate. The relief measures must be general in character and must be applied in every possible way, and contended for, with a persistence and determination that will be content with slow and partial results for the present generation and insure the greatest benefits to posterity. Consequently great care must be exercised that the ship of state be kept sailing in the open waters of general reform, ready to respond to and take advantage of any favorable wind that may be presented. The shoals and rocks of special ideas must be avoided as containing the elements of disaster.

While all will admit that nothing will be of as great service in promoting the objects the Alliance seeks to achieve as certain legislative enactments, still nothing could be more disastrous to the order than to tie it to that one channel of reform, because by directing all effort in that direction, it would soon be recognized as the chief object of the order, and when that was accomplished the necessity for the existence of the order would no longer remain and it would naturally go to pieces. He who teaches as a panacea for all, either a party reform, a money reform, a land reform, or any other special reform for general conditions, must not be accepted as a

guide. All the special reforms that contain good must be contended for as methods of the Alliance, but great care should be taken not to confound them with the principles, which are general and are founded on ultimate truth and as such, and in that capacity, are alone capable of meeting the general adverse conditions to be contended with. Hence the necessity in the extension of the work into new territory, of being able to define the issues of which the methods to be pursued will depend, in plain and simple language, so that all will understand readily and endorse fully. In the Cotton Belt co-operation in regulating the price of that product it has been an idea that all could grasp at once and endorse it, but other sections are not favored with a product of which they have a comparative monopoly in the production, and the danger is that without some strong object of peculiar class to act as a ballast, they may attach too much importance to partisan political methods and, getting them mixed with the principles of the order, seriously injure the movement. It must therefore be extremely hazardous to extend the order into new territory without using great caution and giving full notice to all who contemplate joining its ranks, that its objects are, "to teach the principles of economic government in a strictly non-partisan spirit." "To bring about a better understanding among agriculturalists." "To promote mental, moral, social and financial prosperity." "To bury the dead, relieve the sick and afflicted, to comfort the distressed" and that it means "peace on earth and good will to man." While it is every man's duty to his family and country, under our form of government, to be a partisan, the proper place for him to receive a true education is not in a partisan school. Let the order be the great school of truth in which, by a thorough exchange of ideas, all may be truly educated. Let it there be agreed what great principles shall be endorsed. Leave partisanship to the individual, but study and discuss political economy as a class and arrive at true conclusions. There need be no apprehension as to what will be the partisan policy of any people who believe and think alike from enlightened understanding of the same subject. They would then act together and be beyond the reach of those who would try to array them to do battle on account of class prejudice. It is, therefore, suggested that this body, as the representative of all the Alliances now organized, pass such laws as will prohibit Alliances from taking organized action in partisan politics or sectarian religion, under penalty of forfeiture of charter, and that all Alliances to be hereafter organized, be notified of that law before charters are issued to them.

Your attention is called to the necessity of defining—both for the information of the membership and as a guide for your executive—the genius of your laws, both organic and statutory; this will be found a task worthy of careful execution. It seems that the order is under two distinct systems of law and government and must necessarily be so as long as it is a secret order with a written constitution—the charter from the United States government and the constitution adopted at the first meeting of this body composed of delegates from two States and ratified by those States—comprises the organic law. Under it each State is a separate autonomy, limited only by the rights and powers expressly delegated to the National Government in the Constitution, thus making the order like the Government of the United States, a confederated form of republican government and authorizing its legislative branch to make laws to the extent expressly delegated by the Constitution only.

The other system of laws that governs the order and to which it is subject, is similar to that of all other secret societies, and is of the nature of a limited or constitutional monarchy and must ever be so as long as the secret work emanates from the general government. By authority of this

system you have in your legislative capacity, while in session, powers co-ordinate at least with the Constitution. No constitution has ever prescribed a penalty for violating the obligation, still any Sub-Alliance or any President, by virtue of this last system of laws, to which the order is subject, would, on sufficient evidence, expell a member for that offense, and expulsion is the extent of punishment possible under the Constitution. Your powers then, as a legislative body, are supreme under the one system and are only limited by the Constitution under the other. You will, therefore, be at liberty, should you so decide, to pass a system of

STATUTORY LAWS

and to offer the State Alliances constitutional amendments for their adoption. It will be found a great convenience to adopt a uniform rule when enacting statutory laws; have them read by caption, numbered and referred to appropriate committees, also require that they all commence in the same form, as "be it enacted." This will save time from being wasted in useless discussion before the body. Statutory laws enacted by this body, by virtue of the authority of the unwritten law or secret work, should be supreme, controlling and being recognized and enforced by all subordinate divisions of the government. That is to say, should this body pass a law by that authority which effected the individual membership, all State, County and Subordinate Alliances would immediately be subject to that law and responsible for its execution.

The organic law, as embodied in the Constitution, should express nothing but general principles and should leave the provisions for applying those principles entirely to legislative enactment. This is peculiarly necessary in our form of popular government, where amendments to the Constitution have to be ratified by three-fourths of the State Alliances before becoming laws. Hence the necessity of having the Constitution contain as few provisions as possible and restrict it to a simple expression of principles so general and permanent that they will need no change; and to a definition limiting the rights and powers of all concerned. Your present Constitution, therefore, needs very few changes; there are, however, three constitutional amendments submitted to your attention as of sufficient importance to be submitted to the States and you are requested to consider the advisability of so doing.

First, a change as to the manner of raising and the amount of

THE REVENUES

now derived from the States as five per cent. of the gross receipts. There is no necessity for any special elaboration on this point as all will admit that the revenues are not adequate to meet the running expenses which must be incurred, and that this condition must seriously hamper the work. Your secretary has had a hard fight with short funds, he has received less than one thousand dollars and is over one thousand dollars in debt. The office is economically managed when the gross expenses do not exceed thirty-five hundred dollars per year, including stationery postage, printing, etc. But the funds coming in under the present system have been so irregular and vague that the secretary has been compelled to manage along, relying upon other resources for the greater part of the year. He had a right to expect that in the end he would receive enough from this body to pay all indebtedness. No other office has been allowed any expense during the past year. But all of your officers have been compelled to advance the funds from their own pockets to defray their expenses in attending this meeting. This is a hardship and is not just; the laborer is worthy of hire and should at least get his own money returned to him. However, the greatest necessity for revenue is to provide a fund for the elaboration and extension of the work into new fields.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]